

## MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

### ANXIETY

Everyone knows what it is like to be anxious. Everyone has experienced fear, apprehension and worry. It's an unavoidable. Everyday life is full of situations that cause anxiety. Most of the time, it's normal to feel anxious or to worry about our performance on a test or in a sporting event. It's normal to feel concern or worry about a friend

“ANXIETY DOES NOT EMPTY  
TOMORROW OF ITS SORROWS, BUT  
ONLY EMPTIES TODAY OF ITS  
STRENGTH” -CHARLES SPURGEON

who is struggling. It's normal to feel fear when you are confronted with a dangerous situation or to have certain things that scare you (snakes, heights, or public speaking to name a few). For most people, these everyday fears and anxieties are part of life and they are able to manage them without much trouble. However, for a significant amount of people, these fears and anxieties are overwhelming and make everyday life unmanageable. Anxiety is an all-encompassing influence that paralyzes them and put them on the sidelines of their own life. This type of

anxiety often causes poor self-esteem, sleep issues, inability to concentrate, irritability, low frustration tolerance and physical complaints. If you are one of these people for whom anxiety is a constant daily struggle, let me encourage you to speak up and get help. A peaceful existence is possible. Anxiety is very treatable. A combination of therapy and medication is usually effective for the various types of anxiety and anxiety disorders (see box below). However, there are things you can do to address your anxiety.

**Everyday Stress.** There is a connection between anxiety and stress. If you struggle with anxiety, it is important to take steps to prevent everyday stress from getting too high. The higher your stress level, the more likely you are to have increased anxiety. There is, of course, no way to eliminate all stress. This simply means being aware of what causes you stress and doing things to lessen the pressure. For you that might mean taking on less after school activities, or reducing the number of hours you work at your after school job. It may also mean knowing what reduces your stress and making time for

### TYPES OF ANXIETY

- \*Generalized Anxiety Disorder- constant, overwhelming, unrealistic worrying, about everyday life/events.
- \*Social Anxiety Disorder- anxiety centered around being around other people and social situations
- \*Panic Disorder- periods of intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms (heart pounding, dizziness, nausea)
- \*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)- severe anxiety associated with memories of past traumatic events
- \*Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)- ritualized behaviors and obsessions driven by anxious thoughts

those stress reducing activities. Keeping everyday stress lower can help reduce your anxiety.

**Understanding Your Anxiety** Another way to address your anxiety is make sure you have a good understanding of what triggers your anxiety. It is likely that you already know what types of situations make you anxious, but it may help to examine more closely what is going on in your mind and in your body when you are anxious. What type of thoughts go through your mind when you are anxious? Is your mind racing? What are you telling yourself when you are anxious? You also must get an understanding of what is happening physically when you are anxious. Are you sweating, ringing your hands, tapping your feet? Do you feel really warm? Does your head or stomach hurt? Are you breathing really fast or shallow? Is your heart pounding? Do the same for what makes you feel peaceful. What activities make you feel calm and relaxed? Also note what is happening in your mind and body when you feel calm and relaxed. Note your breathing and the pace of your heart? It is important to understand these two states of anxious and calm, in order to begin to find ways to

learn to move from a state of anxiety to a peaceful state. And to recognize when you are starting to become anxious so you can do things to start to calm down right away and avoid becoming overwhelmed with anxiety.

**Thoughts and Feelings.** What we think has great deal of effect on how we feel. Often negative thought patterns are fueling anxiety. Examining your thought patterns with the guidance of a professional therapist can make a huge difference in anxiety. A therapist can provide insight into problematic thought patterns and help you learn how to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. A therapist can also help you develop new, healthier thought patterns. A therapist can also give you tools that will help you calm your mind and body.

If you are struggling with anxiety, find someone you trust to speak with who can help you gain access to a professional therapist.

“ANXIETY IS A THIN STREAM OF FEAR TRICKLING THROUGH THE MIND. IF ENCOURAGED, IT CUTS A CHANNEL INTO WHICH ALL THOUGHTS ARE DRAINED.”-ARTHUR SOMERS ROCHE